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## IS POSITIVE SCIENCE NOMINALISM OR REALISM?

Do universals possess reality—or are particular things alone real? Are all general ideas to be held as simple names, *flatus vocis*, representations without content and without reality? Does the particular include all that exists, and is the general idea only a fiction formed for convenience of expression?

At first thought, it is a little strange that this old dispute should revive in our day amid the blaze of Positive Science and enlightened Baconian Induction. Has not this whole question been set at rest by the doctrine of “Conceptualism” advanced by our modern eclectic thinkers?

However clear and simple the answers may be to these questions if regarded in the light of the traditional Metaphysics of this country, we apprehend that our new thinkers—those who call themselves Positivists, or who rank under the banner of Herbert Spencer—are very nearly in a quandary. Their declarations at the outset are very unmistakably nominalistic. They regard the particular thing as alone real, and all general names as without corresponding reality. The reader of Spencer’s *First Principles* remembers the precise statement of chapter second, to the effect that conceptions are symbolic when general, and that they are real and true only in ratio of their application to the particular individual. But we are disappointed in these

men when we expect to find them consistent. The entire process of their scientific expositions has this general object in view: *the reduction of all particularity and individuality back to general terms, such as matter and force, or law.* They prove that there is no such thing as permanence of the particular—that it is only an immediate-phase of a general process—that its only reality or existence is its vanishing (its beginning and ceasing)—that “the sole truth which transcends experience by underlying it, is the persistence of Force.” Thus, while claiming to be nominalists or conceptualists at the outset, they end in asserting, in the most explicit language, the reality of the universal. They would say that the concepts and names Force and Matter correspond to the most real of realities, while they are the most general and farthest removed from the realm of particularity.

That such realism as this is called pantheistic or materialistic, and is dreaded by spiritual-or religious thinkers, makes the question all the more a vital one. That Religion can be defended at all only on the ground of the highest realism, must never be forgotten. Unless the “Real of all realities” is a Spirit—not an abstract Universal such as the correlationists hold, but a *concrete Universal* such as Plato and Aristotle held (the one virtually, the other explicitly)—Religion must necessarily be fetichism, and nothing above that.

But this position assumed by the new realists is so strange when viewed from the premises with which they set out, that it deserves a more definite exposition.

#### *Scientific Premises.*

Starting from the assumption that all speculation is vain, that there is no such thing as pure thought; or that if there is any pure thought, it is mere idle fancy; and holding that a knowledge of the true is obtained by means of the senses, and that its truth is measured by its exact correspondence to the particular facts as they exist in their separateness or isolation in the world; holding, moreover, that classification and generalization, the discovery of laws, is the legitimate occupation of science, although its results are symbolic or inadequate just in proportion to their generality; holding to these irreconcilable premises, they proceed to expound the doctrines of Positive Science.

*Scientific Results.*

1. Investigation of the so-called facts of the senses leads on all hands to the discovery that each fact is a passing phase of a larger fact. What one takes at first sight for a particular individual, is a phase in the manifestation of the individuality of some phenomenon of greater scope. All the marks, attributes, qualities and modes of "this particular individual" are placed there by the activity of a more general and more-widely-inclusive individual process. It would be as absurd to attribute independent individuality to the color of this violet, which we know to depend on properties of the violet, and on earth, air, water and light, to say nothing of the structure of our senses. Its individuality is nothing; it is a *phase* of individuality, and its reality is all borrowed or secondary. What gives it reality lies behind it.

2. Science declares that all these material phenomena are manifestations of Force. The things which are sensuously perceived are only transitory phases in the ceaseless process of the play of forces. These forces are correlated in such a way that their constantly recurring and constantly annulled equilibrium is what is known as *matter*. But force is the only abiding; and it is not the abiding as particular forces,—each particular force loses its individuality and vanishes in another.

3. Thus particular individuality continues to recede before the analytic investigation of science. "The species lives, but the individual dies." Not only "this particular" of the senses dissolves into the particular forces, such as light, heat, electricity, magnetism, attraction, &c.: but each of these particular forces proves to be a mere vanishing phase in a process of force in general. Each of these particular forces exists only while in process of manifestation, and the process of manifestation is only the process of transition from an antecedent form of force to a subsequent one.

4. What we call the *reality* of a force, its perceptibility by our senses, is only its passage into another or its vanishing, its ceasing to be itself, its loss of individuality, its negation and annulment. Its reality and particularity is, then, only the destruction of that same reality and particularity.

5. The reality has, therefore, two sides, (a) origination and

(b) evanescence. (a) It originates in that activity of force which acts on a previous state, changing it to "this particular reality." (b) "This particular reality" is, in turn, immediately swallowed up by a like negative action of force. Only force in general abides. It acts continually, and its activity is both positive and negative—originating the particular by the same act that annuls the particular. Force in general causes the marks, properties, qualities, and attributes, of the particular reality, and at the same time it destroys them. The constant result is a phenomenal world, wherein the particular is perpetually beginning and ceasing without interval between the two sides of the process. The very reality itself is the vanishing thereof.

6. Thus Force in general is self-related, in the sense that its activity is always directed to the negating or annulment of the very determinations that it has caused. It destroys just what it originated. But its act of destroying is an act of originating new determinations. Force, therefore, is the source of all reality, and is the resistless might before which reality vanishes. Force is thus something more than reality; it is reality *and* potentiality—it is *Actuality* (the *ἐνέργεια* of Aristotle). Thus we arrive at something more real than reality, taking the latter in the sense of the existing, or transient, particular things. Force as thus seized is a Universal, and is the real in all realities. In fact, it requires the production and annulment of the entire round of phenomenal realities to completely manifest this Universal or Actual, which is called Force by the scientific man.

7. Force in general is not any particular, real force; for such real force is a particularized form—a limitation of force in general. Hence universal force manifests its superior generality by negating every particular force. It is of the utmost importance to see this point. *It is involved in the very being or reality of a particular force that the very limitation or determination which constitutes it is at the same time the activity of the general force engaged precisely in annulling the particular force.* What constitutes it destroys it. Light, for example, shines in its diffusion or transition to its opposite. Every force in specific action is passing from a tension to an equilibrium—i.e. from one specific form to another.

8. Under the process of correlation, wherein real forces lose their individuality, only abstract or general force abides. This may be called IDEAL force when contrasted with particular real forces; it is cognized only by inference, and not by immediate sensuous perception. It is a really-existent universal or generic entity—an Actuality whose manifestation is the correlation of forces. The particular forces are *its* reality, but not their *own*; for their manifestation is their destruction, but both phases give evidence of the reality of the Universal. In the entire round from one force through all the others back to the same force again, we have the successive annulment of all the characteristic distinctions of the several forces, and thus we have left force in general as the pure negative might whose constitution or nature is self-made by its activity in the play of forces. Its universal nature—its ascent out of particularity—refusing to be limited to a special form—appears in the negative side of the process, wherein it perpetually annuls special characteristics. Its positive affirmative side appears in the perpetual production of the special out of the negation of (old forms of) the same.

9. Wherein this Universal force, which is a self-determined, differs from the thinking activity or Mind (*ἐντελέχεια*), is a profitable inquiry. But the sole point we had in view here was simply to show the new doctrine of Realism now arising in place of the dismal nominalism and stifling conceptualism in vogue.

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## THEORIES OF MENTAL GENESIS.

By JOHN WEISS.

The later scientific method derives the conscience from selected experiences of the useful and agreeable. In the finest minds the moral sense is only the clarified residue of the experiences of people in learning to live safely and comfortably with each other. It sums them up, but can add nothing to them. It becomes, like a family resemblance, a permanent trait acquired by inheritance. A fresh experience may compel a fresh adjustment, and the moral sense can be